

# COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

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> MARIA M. OMS CHIEF DEPUTY

September 15, 2009

TO:

Supervisor Don Knabe, Chairman

Supervisor Gloria Molina

Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky

Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

FROM:

Wendy L. Watanabe

Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT:

TRINITY FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY CONTRACT REVIEW - A

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES PROVIDER

We have completed a contract compliance review of Trinity Foster Family Agency (Trinity or Agency), a Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) provider.

#### **Background**

DCFS contracts with Trinity, a private non-profit community-based organization to recruit, train and certify foster care parents for the supervision of children DCFS places in foster care. Once the Agency places a child, it is required to monitor the placement until the child is discharged from the program.

Trinity is required to hire qualified social workers to provide case management and act as a liaison between DCFS and the foster parents. The Agency oversees a total of 107 certified foster homes in which 170 DCFS children were placed at the time of our review. Trinity is located in the Fourth and Fifth Districts. They also operate offices in San Bernardino and Riverside Counties.

DCFS pays Trinity a negotiated monthly rate, per child placement, established by the California Department of Social Services' (CDSS) Foster Care Rates Bureau. Based on the child's age, Trinity receives between \$1,589 and \$1,865 per month, per child. Out of these funds, the Agency pays the foster parents between \$624 and \$790 per month, per child. DCFS paid Trinity approximately \$3,478,000 during Fiscal Year 2008-09.

### Purpose/Methodology

The purpose of our review was to determine whether Trinity was providing the services outlined in their Program Statement and the County contract. We reviewed certified foster parent files, children's case files, personnel files and interviewed Trinity staff. We also visited a number of certified foster homes and interviewed several children and foster parents.

#### **Results of Review**

Trinity needs to ensure that foster homes, foster parent certification files, Needs and Services Plans (NSPs), Quarterly Reports, Special Incident Reports and children's case files are in compliance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. We specifically noted the following:

- Two of the 15 foster homes visited did not adequately secure detergents and cleaning solutions. In addition, one of the two homes did not adequately secure prescription medications. Subsequent to our review, the Agency provided documentation that the homes secured the detergents, cleaning solutions and medications.
- One of the 15 foster homes visited did not have an adequate emergency plan for exiting from the second story of the home. Subsequent to our review, the Agency provided documentation that the foster parents purchased an emergency escape ladder. In addition, one of the 15 foster homes visited had a smoke detector in the hallway to the children's bedroom that was not operable because the battery was dead. Prior to the conclusion of our visit, the foster mother replaced the battery.
- Three of the 15 foster homes visited were not conducting and documenting disaster drills with the children upon placement and at least every six months thereafter.
- Two of the 15 homes visited were not maintained in accordance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. In one home, the children's bathroom was very dirty and in need of cleaning. In the other home, the carpet in the main living area needed to be professionally cleaned or replaced and the kitchen walls needed to be cleaned or repainted. Subsequent to our review, the Agency provided documentation that the bathroom, carpet and kitchen walls had been cleaned.
- One of the 15 foster homes reviewed had children placed in the home that did not meet the home's certification requirements. Specifically, the home was certified for children four to ten years old. However, two children ages 14 and 17 years were placed in the home at the time of our review. Subsequent to our review, Trinity provided an updated certification allowing the children in the home.

- One of the 15 foster home certification files reviewed did not contain documentation that the Agency conducted criminal and child abuse clearances for the foster parent's 18 year-old daughter who was living in the home. Subsequent to our review, Trinity provided documentation that the criminal and child abuse clearances had been conducted.
- Four of the 15 homes reviewed were not assessed by Trinity to determine the foster parents' ability to effectively care for more than two children prior to placing more than two children in the homes. At the time of our review, two of the homes had three children, one home had four children and one home had five children.
- Four of the 26 foster parent certification files reviewed did not contain all of the required information. Specifically, two did not contain valid First Aid certificates, one did not contain a valid CPR certificate, and one did not contain a valid CPR certificate and documentation of a driver's license and current automobile insurance. Subsequent to our review, Trinity provided all the required documents.
- Four of the 27 initial dental examinations reviewed were not conducted within the required timeframes. The examinations were conducted an average of two months late. In addition, six of the 27 initial medical examinations reviewed were not conducted within the required timeframes. The examinations were conducted an average of 45 days late.
- NSPs did not always contain all the required information. Specifically, 25 of the 27 NSPs reviewed contained goals that were not specific, measurable and time-limited. In addition, three of the 27 NSPs reviewed were not prepared within the required timeframes and 12 of the 27 NSPs reviewed were not approved by the DCFS social workers as required.
- Two of the 27 Quarterly Reports reviewed were not prepared within the required timeframes. The two Quarterly Reports were completed an average of 12 days late.
- Three Quarterly Reports reviewed did not include a copy of the child's Emancipation Preparation Contract as required for children over 14 years old. At the time of our review, five children were over 14 years old.
- One case file reviewed contained documentation of behavior that required the Agency to prepare a Special Incident Report. However, the Agency did not prepare the required report.
- Two of the 35 Termination Reports reviewed were not prepared within the required timeframes. Both Termination Reports were completed 35 days late.

Board of Supervisors September 15, 2009 Page 4

- Three of the 27 case files reviewed did not contain documentation that the children were visited weekly by Trinity's social worker during the first three months of placement as required. During this period, five required visits were not documented. In addition, one of the 27 case files reviewed did not contain documentation that Trinity's social worker conducted two of the weekly contacts at the certified foster home as required by the County contract.
- Three of the 27 case files reviewed did not contain documentation that the children's DCFS social worker was provided with monthly phone updates on the children's progress.
- Two of the 27 case files reviewed did not include sufficiently detailed progress notes to permit an evaluation of the services provided as required.
- One of Trinity's social workers did not meet the educational requirements of the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. The social worker did not possess a qualifying Master's Degree for the social worker position. Subsequent to our review, Trinity obtained an exception from CDSS Community Care Licensing.

The details of our review along with recommendations for corrective action are attached.

#### **Review of Report**

We discussed our report with Trinity on July 20, 2009. In their attached response, Trinity management indicates the actions the Agency has taken to implement the recommendations (Attachment I). We also notified DCFS of the results of our review. In their response (Attachment II), DCFS indicates they will follow up on our recommendations during their next monitoring review tentatively scheduled for February 2010.

We thank Trinity for their cooperation and assistance during this review. Please call me if you have any questions or your staff may contact Don Chadwick at (213) 253-0301.

WLW:MMO:JET:DC:AA

#### Attachments

c: William T Fujioka, Chief Executive Officer Patricia S. Ploehn, Director, Department of Children and Family Services Ted Myers, Chief Deputy Director, Department of Children and Family Services Susan Kerr, Senior Deputy Director, Department of Children and Family Services Tom Avramis, President Board of Directors, Trinity FFA John Neiuber, CEO, Trinity FFA Jean Chen, Community Care Licensing Public Information Office Audit Committee

### FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY PROGRAM TRINITY FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY FISCAL YEAR 2008-09

#### **BILLED SERVICES**

#### **Objective**

Determine whether Trinity Foster Family Agency (Trinity or Agency) provided program services in accordance with their County contract and California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Title 22 regulations.

#### Verification

We visited 15 of the 107 Los Angeles County certified foster homes that Trinity billed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) in August and September 2008 and interviewed 22 foster parents and 21 of the 40 children placed in the 15 homes. We also observed six toddlers who were too young to interview. In addition, we reviewed case files for 26 foster parents and 27 children and the Agency's monitoring activity.

#### Results

The foster children indicated they enjoyed living with their foster parents and the foster parents indicated they were satisfied with the services they received from the Agency. In addition, the toddlers we observed appeared well cared for and happy.

Trinity needs to ensure foster homes are in compliance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. Trinity also needs to ensure foster parent certification files, Needs and Services Plans (NSPs), Quarterly Reports, Termination Reports, Special Incident Reports and children's case files contain all the required information. In addition, Trinity needs to ensure children are visited the required amount of times. We specifically noted the following:

#### Foster Home Visitation

- Two (13%) of the 15 foster homes visited did not adequately secure detergents and cleaning solutions. In addition, one of the two homes did not adequately secure prescription medications. Subsequent to our review, the Agency provided documentation that the homes secured the detergents, cleaning solutions and medications.
- One (7%) of the 15 foster homes visited did not have an adequate emergency plan for exiting from the second story of the home. Subsequent to our review, the Agency provided documentation that the foster parents purchased an emergency

escape ladder. In addition, one (7%) of the 15 foster homes visited had a smoke detector in the hallway to the children's bedroom that was not operable because the battery was dead. Prior to the conclusion of our visit, the foster mother replaced the battery.

- Three (20%) of the 15 foster homes visited were not conducting and documenting disaster drills with the children upon placement and at least every six months thereafter.
- Two (13%) of the 15 homes visited were not maintained in accordance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. In one home, the children's bathroom was very dirty and in need of cleaning. In the other home, the carpet in the main living area needed to be professionally cleaned or replaced and the kitchen walls needed to be cleaned or repainted. Subsequent to our review, the Agency provided documentation that the bathroom, carpet and kitchen walls had been cleaned.

#### **Foster Parent Certification**

- One (7%) of the 15 foster homes reviewed had children placed in the home that did
  not meet the home's certification requirements. Specifically, the home was
  certified for children four to ten years old. However, two children ages 14 and 17
  years were placed in the home at the time of our review. Subsequent to our
  review, Trinity provided an updated certification allowing the children in the home.
- One (7%) of the 15 foster home certification files reviewed did not contain documentation that the Agency conducted criminal and child abuse clearances for the foster parent's 18 year-old daughter who was living in the home. Subsequent to our review, Trinity provided documentation that the criminal and child abuse clearances had been conducted.
- Four (27%) of the 15 homes reviewed were not assessed by Trinity to determine the foster parents' ability to effectively care for more than two children prior to placing more than two children in the homes. At the time of our review, the four homes had an average of four children placed in the homes.
- Four (15%) of the 26 foster parent certification files reviewed did not contain all of the required information. Specifically, two did not contain valid First Aid certificates, one did not contain a valid CPR certificate and one did not contain a valid CPR certificate and documentation of a driver's license and current automobile insurance. Subsequent to our review, Trinity provided all the required documents.

#### Children's Medical Services

 Four (15%) of the 27 initial dental examinations reviewed were not conducted within the required timeframes. The examinations were conducted an average of two months late. In addition, six (22%) of the 27 initial medical examinations reviewed were not conducted within the required timeframes. The examinations were conducted an average of 45 days late.

#### Needs and Services Plans and Quarterly Reports

- Twenty-five (93%) of the 27 NSPs reviewed contained goals that were not specific, measurable and time-limited.
- Three (11%) of the 27 NSPs reviewed were not prepared within the required timeframes. The three NSPs were completed an average of five days late.
- Twelve (44%) of the 27 NSPs reviewed were not approved by the DCFS social workers as required. Trinity provided documentation that the NSPs were forwarded to the DCFS social workers for approval. However, the Agency did not follow-up when the NSPs were not approved by the DCFS social workers.
- Two (7%) of the 27 Quarterly Reports reviewed were not prepared within the required timeframes. The three Quarterly Reports were completed an average of 12 days late.
- Three Quarterly Reports reviewed did not include a copy of the child's Emancipation Preparation Contract as required for children over 14 years old. At the time of our review, five children were over 14 years old.

#### Special Incident Reports and Termination Reports

- One case file reviewed contained documentation of behavior that required the Agency to prepare a Special Incident Report. However, the Agency did not prepare the required report.
- Two (6%) of the 35 Termination Reports reviewed were not prepared within the required timeframes. Both Termination Reports were completed 35 days late.

#### Children's Case Files

• Three (11%) of the 27 case files reviewed did not contain documentation that the children were visited weekly by Trinity's social worker during the first three months of placement as required. During this period, five required visits were not documented. In addition, one (4%) of the 27 case files reviewed did not contain documentation that Trinity's social worker conducted two of the weekly contacts at the certified foster home as required by the County contract.

- Three (11%) of the 27 case files reviewed did not contain documentation that the children's DCFS social worker was provided with monthly phone updates on the children's progress.
- Two (7%) of the 27 case files reviewed did not include sufficiently detailed progress notes to permit an evaluation of the services provided as required.

#### Recommendations

### Trinity management ensure:

- 1. Staff adequately monitor foster homes to ensure they comply with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.
- 2. Foster parents adequately secure detergents, cleaning solutions, and other items that could pose a potential safety hazard to children.
- 3. Foster parents maintain an adequate emergency plan for the home and conduct and document disaster drills with foster children upon placement and every six months thereafter.
- 4. Foster homes have operable smoke detectors.
- 5. Foster homes are maintained in accordance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.
- 6. Children placed in homes meet the home's certification requirements.
- 7. Criminal and child abuse clearances are conducted for all adults residing in the foster home.
- 8. Foster home assessments are completed for homes where more than two children are placed.
- Foster parent certification files contain all the required information including documentation of CPR and First Aid certification, automobile insurance, and driver's license.
- 10. Children's initial medical and dental examinations are conducted within the required timeframes.
- 11. NSPs contain goals that are specific, measurable and time-limited, are prepared within the required timeframes, and are approved by the DCFS social workers.

- 12. Quarterly Reports are prepared within the required timeframes and include an Emancipation Preparation Contract for children who are 14 years of age and older.
- 13. Special Incident Reports are prepared when required.
- 14. Termination Reports are prepared within the required timeframes.
- 15. Children are visited weekly during the first three months of placement with at least two of the weekly visits occurring in the foster home.
- 16. DCFS social workers are updated monthly regarding the children's progress.
- 17. Progress notes are maintained in sufficient detail to permit an evaluation of the services provided.

#### **CLIENT VERIFICATION**

#### **Objective**

To determine whether the program participants received the services that Trinity billed to DCFS.

#### Verification

We interviewed 21 children placed in 15 Trinity certified foster homes and 22 foster parents to confirm the services the Agency billed to DCFS. In addition, we observed six toddlers who were too young to interview.

#### **Results**

The foster children indicated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents and the foster parents indicated that they were satisfied with the services they received from the Agency. In addition, the toddlers we observed appeared well cared for and happy.

#### Recommendation

None.

#### STAFFING/CASELOAD LEVELS

#### **Objective**

Determine whether Trinity social workers' caseloads do not exceed 15 placements and whether the supervising social worker does not supervise more than six social workers as required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.

#### **Verification**

We interviewed Trinity's administrator and reviewed caseload statistics and payroll records for the Agency's social workers and supervising social worker.

#### Results

Overall, Trinity's 21 social workers carried an average caseload of nine cases, and the Agency's seven supervising social workers supervised an average of three social workers.

#### **Recommendation**

None.

### **STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS**

#### **Objective**

Determine whether Trinity staff possess the education and work experience qualifications required by their County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. In addition, determine whether the Agency conducted hiring clearances prior to hiring their staff and provided ongoing training to staff.

#### Verification

We interviewed Trinity's administrator and reviewed each staff's personnel file for documentation to confirm their education and work experience qualifications, hiring clearances and ongoing training.

#### Results

Trinity's administrator and supervising social workers possessed the education and work experience required. In addition, the Agency conducted hiring clearances prior to hiring their staff and provided ongoing training to staff working on the County contract. However, one of Trinity's social workers did not meet the educational requirements of the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. The social worker did not possess a qualifying Master's Degree for the social worker position. Subsequent to our review,

Trinity obtained an exception from CDSS Community Care Licensing for the employee without the qualifying Master's Degree.

## Recommendation

18. Trinity management ensure staff working on the County contract possess the appropriate education requirements.



## Foster Care LANCASTER/PALMDALE

July 29, 2009

To:

Supervisor Don Knabe, Chairman

Supervisor Gloria Molina Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From:

Julie Bruner, Trinity Foster Care Executive Director

Subject:

Trinity Foster Family Agency Response to Contract Review

In the fall of 2008 (October-November) the Audit Controller's office conducted an audit of our foster care program, which consists of six offices located in the following communities; Lancaster, West Covina, Long Beach, Rancho, Moreno Valley and Victorville. The audit focused on services provided in 2008. The following is Trinity Foster Family Agency's response to the recommendations outlined in the Audit Controller's review.

#### Recommendations:

1. Staff adequately monitors foster homes to ensure they comply with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.

<u>Response</u>: Trinity's foster care social workers (FCSW) complete monthly, six month and yearly physical plant inspections of each certified home. These procedures have been reviewed with the staff to ensure home inspections are thorough and the necessary follow-up completed.

2. Foster parents adequately secure detergents, cleaning solutions, and other items that could pose a potential safety hazard to children.

Response: Trinity had one home that had a bottle of chlorine stored on top of a washing machine and another home's lock for the cleaning solutions was broken. These deficiencies have been corrected and the homes are being monitored.

3. Foster parents maintain an adequate emergency plan for the home and conduct and document disaster drills with foster children upon placement and every six months thereafter.

Response: Trinity had two homes that did not conduct emergency drills as required. The agency has a disaster drill record form that is to be posted by the main telephone in the foster home. This deficiency has been corrected and will be monitored by the FCSW for compliance. The agency provided two hour training for all staff regarding this regulation and agency procedures.

4. Foster homes have operable smoke detectors.

<u>Response</u>: Trinity had one home where the smoke detector when activated during the audit was not loud. The batteries were changed, during the audit, and the smoke a detector is now working.

5. Foster homes are maintained in accordance with the County Contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.

Response: Trinity foster homes are reviewed each month for CCL Title 22 compliance and in a more extensive manner every six months to ensure they are in compliance. Staff has received a review on these procedures to ensure thoroughness and proper follow through.

6. Children placed in homes meet the home's certification requirements.

Response: Trinity had one home whose certification of approval form indicated the age ranges of four – ten and they had two children in their home who were fourteen and seventeen. This error was corrected. All of our foster parents receive pre-certification training that prepares them for children form birth to eighteen and are certified for that age range.

7. Criminal and child abuse clearances are conducted for all adults residing in the foster home.

Response: Trinity had one home where the foster parent's adult daughter turned eighteen and she had not yet been printed. This error was corrected immediately after the audit and clearances were received with copies sent to the auditor. It is Trinity's policy to have all adults living in the foster home have DOJ and CAI clearances.

8. Foster home assessments are completed for homes where more than two children are placed.

Response: There were two homes where the assessment was completed late and two homes where the assessment was not completed. The error was correct. Each home had a total of three children. Trinity revised the form to have it sent to our Intake Dept. with in 24 hours of the placement. Additionally, each foster home that will require the assessment is noted on the agency's available homes list. This will serve as a reminder to the office supervisor that prior to a new child placed in the home an over-two assessment needs to be completed.

 Foster parent certification files contain all the required information including document of CPR and First Aid certification, automobile insurance, and driver's licenses.

Response: There were two foster homes involved in this finding. In one home the foster mother had an expired CPR card and no proof of auto insurance. The foster father did not have his driver's license in the file. In the second home both foster parents did not have a first aid card on file. Subsequent to the review the agency provided all of the required documents. Trinity has a foster parent re-certification tracking log that is used to track these requirements. All staff has been retrained on the importance of keeping all of the foster parent files up to date.

10. Children's initial medical and dental examinations are conducted within the required time frames.

Response: The staff received training to ensure that children age three and over receive a dental exam with in thirty days of placement and a medical exam with in ten days. If there are problems with medical cards or HUB medical centers to document these issues and contact the CSWs supervisor is no resolution is found.

- 11. NSPs contain goals that are specific, measurable and time limited, are prepared within the required time frames, and are approved by DCFS social workers.

  Response: Extensive six hour training was provided to the staff regarding how to write treatment goals. The training curriculum was provided and the FCSWs can use it as a reference when they write future reports. Staff were also reminded of the required times frames for the reports. Trinity utilizes Foster Trak and prints out a report due tracking log each month. We also revised the cover letter that is attached to the quarterly report which has a section for documenting the attempts to get the CSWs to sign and return the signature page of the report. The requirement of 3 attempts with the last being to the CSWs supervisor is also recorded on the cover letter.
- 12. Quarterly reports are prepared within the required time frames and include an Emancipation Preparation Contract for children who are 14 years of age and older. Response: Three children's reports were completed past due and three reports did not include the Emancipation Preparation Contract. It has been reemphasized to social work staff to complete their reports within the required times frames. They have also been instructed to initiate the completion of the Emancipation Preparation Contract with the CSWs and if there is no participation from the CSW they have been instructed to call the CSWs supervisor and document the issues in the child's file.
- 13. Special Incident Reports are prepared when required.

Response: There was one incident where an SIR was not completed, a teen youth skipped a class at school and visited her relatives home. The social work staff and supervisor of that office were reminded of the reporting rules and to consult the agency's SIR Reporting Guidelines form.

- 14. Termination Reports are prepared within the required time frames.

  Response: There were two termination reports (siblings) that were not completed on time. That social work staff and supervisor of that office were reminded of the time frames regarding termination reports and were instructed to ensure they track their reports due via the Foster Trak system.
- 15. Children are visited weekly during the first three month of placement with at least two of the weekly visits occurring in the foster home.

  Response: This error involved four children, two of which were siblings. The FCSW staff and supervisor received training regarding home visit requirements.
- 16. DCFS social workers are updated monthly regarding the children's progress.

  Response: There was one child where the FCSW did not contact the CSW during both of the auditor's sample months (Aug. & Sept. 2008) and two siblings where the CSW was not contacted during the month of Aug. 80. The FCSW staff has received training regarding the requirement to update the CSW monthly regarding the children's progress. The FCSW staff was reminded if the CSW can not be reached to document in the child's file their attempts.
- 17. Progress notes are maintained in sufficient detail to permit an evaluation of the services provided.

Response: This finding occurred with a sibling set serviced by one FCSW. Training and monitoring have been provided for this FCSW. A general training to all FCSW to ensure their progress notes are maintained in sufficient detail to permit the evaluation of services provided will occur.

18. Staff working on the County contract possesses the appropriate education requirements.

Response: This finding occurred in one office where the FCSW had a master's degree in Education. The error was corrected immediately by requesting an exempt by CCL. The office directors were given training regarding the educational requirements for FCSW staff.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at 909 825-5588 extension 294.

Sincerely.

Julie Bruner

Foster Care Executive Director

Juli Brun



## County of Los Angeles DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

425 Shatto Place, Los Angeles, California 90020 (213) 351-5602

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Fifth District

August 6, 2009

TO:

Aggie Alonso, Chief Accountant-Auditor Countywide Contract Monitoring Division

FROM:

Elizabeth A Howard, Section Head Out of Home Care Management Division

Foster Family Agency/Group Home Performance Management

## DCFS RESPONSE TO THE AUDITOR CONTROLLER'S CONTRACT REVIEW OF TRINITY FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY

The Out of Home Care Management Division (OHCMD) has reviewed the Auditor-Controller's (A-C) August 3, 2009 final draft report of the contract compliance review of Trinity Foster Family Agency. Although the report notes several programmatic issues, there were no safety issues which require an immediate response from DCFS.

We will conduct a follow-up review based on the A-C's recommendations, which is tentatively scheduled for February, 2010.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (626) 569-6804.

#### MG:EAH:EK

 Wendy L. Watanabe, Auditor-Controller Patricia Ploehn, Director, DCFS Lisa Perrish, Deputy Director, DCFS Marilynne Garrison, Division Chief, DCFS